

Testimony in favor of HB 6666

Honorable members of the Education Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Nancy Ahern. I am strongly in favor of the provision in HB 6666 that would create the position of adjunct instructor for part-time teachers in the arts at interdistrict magnet schools such as the extraordinary Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven, where I live. I thank fellow New Haveners Senator Looney and Representative Staples for their role in bringing this legislation forward.

The part-time teachers at ECA are talented, dedicated professionals with advanced degrees. Most also teach at local colleges and universities. They are gifted musicians, artists, dancers and theater performers who, frankly, will simply leave ECA if they are forced to become state-certified. Imagine telling faculty at the Yale School of Music or the Hartt School that they could not teach a class at ECA because they're not certified! Yet without these teachers, ECA cannot continue to provide the exceptional instruction in arts education that draws students from throughout the region. And these are great students, 92 percent of whom go on to college after graduation from high school.

Both President Obama and his opponent Senator McCain have said that it's time to begin thinking in new ways about how best to educate our children, who lag far behind students in other first-world countries. Surely one of the first changes we can make is to have the flexibility to permit the most talented teachers among us, whether state-certified or not, to share their unique talents and expertise with students avidly eager to learn. In other states, including New York, they already do. And at ECA, they've already proven that this works very, very well. Please have the foresight and courage to pass HB 6666 and make it official.